

STATE OF CALIFORNIA SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY - RECOMMENDATION

Sierra Nevada Conservancy Grant Program Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Act of 2006 (Proposition 84)

Subregion: CENTRAL **County:** PLACER

Applicant: PLACER COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF FACILITY SERVICES

Project Title: HIDDEN FALLS REGIONAL PARK – FUEL LOAD REDUCTION AND RELATED FIRE SAFE ACTIVITIES

Application Number: SNC 070246

PROJECT SCOPE

This project will create a series of strategically placed shaded fuel breaks across Hidden Falls Regional Park in order to help protect the park and surrounding properties from catastrophic wildfire, and ensure the protection of the watershed associated with the park. The total area of fuel breaks created will be about 94 acres; the majority is woodland, but about 10 acres is comprised of grassland. In addition, an 8-mile-long by 15-foot-wide cleared zone totaling 14 acres will be created around the perimeter of the park to provide fire fighting access. This grant also provides for the purchase of an all-terrain mower for the creation and maintenance of grassland clearing. Work is currently under way at the east end of the park, including the parking area, using non-SNC funding. This SNC grant will provide completion of these fire breaks as well as creation of others in the plan.

RECOMMENDATION

Approve at the reduced amount of \$506,207 to account for a reduction in administrative expenses to remain within the 15% cap – this project provides a significant contribution to reducing the threat of catastrophic wildfire threat to the 1,200-acre park, as well as for surrounding property. There are two major water courses in the park which will be protected through mitigation of fire threat.

LETTERS OF SUPPORT

Placer County Parks Commission
Placer County Air Pollution Control District
Placer Land Trust
Placer Nature Center
Lincoln Hills Hiking Group
Annette Nylander, Chair of the CST Department at Sierra College
Action Coalition of Equestrians
Meadow Vista Trails Association
International Mountain Bicycling Association
Jim Howard, Coach for the Colfax High School Cross Country team

PROJECT SCHEDULE

DETAILED PROJECT DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE
Purchase all-terrain mower	July or Sep. 2008
Complete fuel break clearing for Fuel Breaks E & F	July 2008 – June 2009
Perimeter clearing	July 2008 – March 2010
Progress report	January 2009
Fuel Breaks C & D	Oct. 2008 – June 2009
Progress report	July 2009
Progress report	January 2010
Fuel Break A	June 2009 – March 2010
Final report	April 1, 2010

PROJECT COSTS

PROJECT BUDGET CATEGORIES	TOTAL SNC FUNDING
Fuel Break clearing – forested/brush areas	299,750
Perimeter clearing	100,430
Purchase of all-terrain mower	40,000
Directly related administrative expenses	66,027
GRAND TOTAL	\$506,207

HIDDEN FALLS REGIONAL PARK FUEL LOAD REDUCTION AND RELATED FIRE SAFE ACTIVITIES

Project Summary

Hidden Falls Regional Park, located in the Sierra Nevada Foothills between Auburn and Lincoln, is the cornerstone property of the Placer Legacy Open Space and Agricultural Conservation Program consisting of 1181 acres of blue oak woodland, riparian habitat, and historic ranch land preserved in perpetuity for the purpose of passive recreation, natural preservation, and nature education. To date, over \$6 million in state, local, and private funding has been invested in the acquisition, planning, and development of Hidden Falls Regional Park

The easternmost 221 acres of this property was opened to the public on October 30, 2006 with seven miles of multiple-use trails for walking, running, horseback riding, and mountain biking. Development of the remaining 961 acre portion of the park for public use is currently in the planning stage. The park has two significant creeks, Coon Creek and Deadman Creek, traversing the property for approximately 3 miles.

This request includes: 1) creation of shaded fuel breaks covering 94 acres of brush, annual grassland, and timberland; 2) clearing a 15' wide, 8 mile access perimeter around the property (14 acres); 3) mowing 10 acres of grasslands to create defensible space around the parking and staging areas, and 4) the purchase of an All-Terrain Mower for creation of and the on-going maintenance of the shaded fuel breaks and grasslands.

The shaded fuel breaks will range from 200' wide to 300' wide depending upon degree of slopes and will entail a combination of thinning of the forest canopy by removal of trees so that no more than 40-60% of ground is covered by their canopy, trimming ladder fuels from the ground to a height of between 6' to 10', and removing the under story vegetation. Twigs and branches will be chipped and the chips will be broadcast onto the ground to act as a soil stabilization measure, as well as weed inhibitor. Approximately 40 acres of the fuel breaks identified in the Plan consist of grasslands on slopes with grades up to 35%, therefore, the Parks Division is requesting SNC grant funds to purchase an All Terrain Mower at a cost of \$40,000. The All Terrain Mower permits mowing on slopes up to 34 degrees that are not accessible with conventional mowers.

Vegetation management and fuel load reduction will protect the Deadman Creek and Coon Creek watersheds. This project will also significantly reduce the risk of wildfire, protect neighboring communities, wildlife habitat, natural resources and an archaeological site. The overall result of funding for this project will be 108 acres of fuel break, a reduction of risk of wildfire, and protection of the working landscapes, water and air quality.

Total project cost is \$768,859. There have been several partnerships formed that will provide services valued at \$251,000. Total funding requested from Sierra Nevada Conservancy is \$517,859.